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ABSTRACT

Five major areas of administrative responsibility in library media center management are identified and discussed. These include instructional leadership, staff personnel, pupil personnel, financial and business management, and school-community relationships. Objectives and their implementation in each area are considered. (SK)

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MEDIA CENTER MANAGEMENT FACTS OF LIFE

by Mrs. Emma Ruth Christine

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One may read any educational textbook extant and find major administrative tasks as identified and characterized by that particular author. Educators generally agree on the tasks; it is in their interpretation of tasks where wide differences emerge.

This same situation exists in library media center management and administration – the tasks are identified but from then on, one should never generalize. Offered for consideration purposes then, and not as definitive, the five areas of administrative responsibility as listed below might prove worthy of some attention.

Media Management/Administrative Tasks:

1) Instructional leadership
2) Staff personnel
3) Pupil personnel
4) Financial and business management
5) School-community relationships

Instructional Leadership

Where does the media center manager stand in relation to instructional leadership? Obviously, the media administrator *(School Librarian, Ed.)* is in the position of making sure excellence is the hallmark of all materials selected for the instructional programs and reflected in the media collection. Guaranteeing diversity both in content approach and ability level is another charge on the administrator's head. He cannot be complacent or content about this aspect of his work, but must seize the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in these two major concerns, especially since they relate directly to curriculum. Serving on the curriculum committee must be a number one priority for a media administrator for many reasons, not the least of which is that it places him in a position to obtain the necessary facts from which to formulate an appropriate materials selection

policy geared to his particular clientele. . The professional literature is replete with admonitions on the necessity of all instrumental persons being 'in' on the planning of programs with which they will be concerned. Ergo, if the library media administrator is not concerned with the curriculum of his school and the materials upon which it is built, who is? Why, then, is membership on such a committee still viewed askance in some schools? Could it be that some library administrators have not yet requested to be so included? Could it be that some school administrators have not seriously considered the importance of such membership? When either of these situations exist, who should be surprised when facilities are innundated by students demanding materials which are not present since they were unanticipated?

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In-service for teachers properly belongs in the instructional area for the media administrator unless he has sufficient staff to delegate this responsibility to others. As the information specialist, his duties include not only being up-to-date on all instructional materials offered on the market but ahead of 'what's happening'. The supplying of catalogs, brochures, and word of mouth information on the newest titles, types of media available, and other such news commonly is interpreted as in-service. More precisely, however, are demonstrations and discussions of new materials and machines, book talks for particular disciplines, preparation of teaching units as prototypes for library/classroom projects, and small group instruction on how library research skills may be integrated into specific academic classes.[1] These activities point up very particularly the instructional skills of the media administrator and further serve to illustrate his expertise both as an instructor and as an instructional designer.

Direct student/media administrator instructional relationships vary from the traditional 'how to use the card catalog' hints on a one-to-one basis to the less frequently encountered role of classroom instructor on a library-related topic. Too few librarians engage in such legitimate endeavours as constructing and administering tests, either of library skills or of any other measurement of student competency, although the results would be germane to his effective operation. Reading interest surveys, book discussion groups, and a student book/media reviewing publication all suggest avenues too infrequently travelled by the media administrator as instructional connections to the student body, even though he may be the best qualified to establish and formulate such activities. Small or large group instruction on specific library-related skills such as use of the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, various reference works, note-taking, and so forth are too often left for the classroom teacher to initiate rather than the media administrator. Should this be allowed to continue in view of the constantly reiterated statement by librarians that 'we are teachers?' Again, actions speak louder and with more conviction than pronouncements! Why not a specifically designed course emanating from the library, with learning skills such as listening, reading, writing, reporting and interpretation integrated into it so as to make it worthwhile no matter what other academic purpose it might serve?

Subject unit planning by the media administrator and members of the faculty still ranks at the top as an instructional responsibility representing the epitome of professional co-operation for effective student learning. Again, this does not seem to occur often

1. Such a course is described in Christine, E., 'See a need and fill it', AUDIOVISUAL JOURNAL OF ARIZONA, Fall, 1973.

enough nor in as much depth as desirable. Teaching and learning objectives as determined jointly, and in view of the available materials, are usually more successful in results than when developed by one or the other of those concerned.[2]

Staff Personnel

Frequently, the media administrator alone is that magical entity known as 'the staff', perhaps with a secretary or several student assistants. Occasionally, there is a staff of several librarians, several typists, and other helpers requiring 'management'. In any of these situations, there must be a plan of action for the administrator and whomever is to be supervised – a division of labor, of responsibilities delegated, an organization of talent, a channeling of effort directed to purposeful ends. There might be a substantial argument that this task is the most important one of all in order to ever have anything finished! The basic nature of library work dictates a planned approach, although it is doubtful if any library administrator can remember working for more than a few minutes without interruption. Media center programs thrive on interruption, though – a question here, a direction there – but without an overall plan, nothing resumes productive activity afterwards!

One major component of planning is administrative focus on the most productive methods of encouraging associates to perform effectively and then allowing them the freedom so to perform. This latter aspect of administration is frequently neglected to the detriment of all concerned and most directly to their morale. While it is difficult to allow any of the fine control to slip from the greedy fingers of power, recognition must be made of the fact that others can perform many jobs admirably. When this realization is faced, the media administrator's peculiar talents may be more profitably utilized elsewhere.

Pupil Personnel

The library administrator is as intimately concerned with matters directly affecting the student body as any other teacher on campus since the effects of any regulation on student behaviour, standards of dress, attendance, or testing eventually are felt on the library's program and in its facilities. This truth underscores the earlier statement that the library administrator needs to be included in groups making administrative decisions in order to influence those decisions insofar as the library is involved. It is much easier to live with decisions one has helped formulate than to suffer through those imposed from above. In the event the latter condition prevails, the media manager has the perfect right, nay responsibility, to make his objections known at the very top since his program may be affected adversely. It is inexcusable to let opportunities to voice reasoned educationally valid opinions pass without taking advantage of them.

Besides participating in decisions affecting students and thereby the library, the media administrator must make the objectives of his program and activities meaningful to the students. This dictum could extend down even to such a mundane procedure as charging fines. If this practice can be substantiated in terms students understand, the explanation should be patented! It is the rare student who sees a connection between the imposition of a book fine and 'building responsibility' – the reason most often cited for maintaining a fine system. Participation by students in decision-making is one productive way to effect a mutual understanding of ultimate goals. The relationship between the individual learner and the library administrator is reflected most of all in

2. For a report of one such program in American history, see Christine, E., 'Saturation stations: Library/vlassroom collaboration for better learning', to appear in mid-1974.

the climate reigning in the facilities . .. in the staff attitudes .... in the materials selected .... in the policies and procedures followed ... in the day-by-day place of the library on campus in the opinions and attitudes of students towards the library. These elements compose the (value) intangible field of pupil personnel for the library administrator. vague

Financial and Business Management

As more and more studies of performance-based systems are published, it is becoming increasingly evident that the major thrust of financial administrative tasks is toward the effective expenditure of monies to provide essential materials and services to reach identified ends. Determining what is essential must be a joint process with those others concerned and recalls again the cruciality of membership on and acceptance by curriculum planning groups. Those groups make decisions as to course offerings, areas of emphasis to be made, and guidelines to be followed. All these must be known for an intelligent selection of supportive materials. It is incumbent upon administrators of library programs to determine as positively as possible **in advance** of purchase the applicability of materials under consideration for acquisition. This can only be done if the information is similarly known in advance.

Effective budget building is based primarily on the media administrator's long and short term goals for the collection and the defined needs of students and staff. Given an amount of money, all factors must be weighed and then decisions based on an established priority may be made. Too much cannot be said about the long-term planning aspects of media management. One must know where one wants to go with the facilities, the collection, and the programs; one must plan budgetary allocations to cover these objectives; then, one can substantiate the need for such monies by showing their place in the long-term growth of the library facilities as an integral part of the school's program.

One logical place to accomplish these aims is in the annual report which should be prepared without fail by every media administrator. A copy of this document should be distributed to the principal, the superintendent, the president of the governing school board, the curriculum director, and any other important official involved in the future (or possible discontinuance) of the media program and its personnel. Too often the annual report is looked upon only as a statistical document; it should be broadened to become a way of informing fellow educators outside the library sphere with an understanding of what has happened to public funds, what results have occurred from prior planning, what is envisioned for the future, and moreover, as a means of arousing interest and involvement.

The usual report includes several parts such as statistics on the collection, circulation figures, current inventories, and loss/stolen report; the financial section showing amounts expended in all budget categories; statistics on use of the facilities by staff and students; and personal activities of the professional staff. The budget section should also include the arguments espoused for any developmental project the media administrator advocates and which require either more money in a particular budget (i.e. periodicals to cover increased demand and subscription prices), or, rarely, a decrease in an account because of fewer expenses (i.e. supplies which were bought in the current year covering the incoming year's needs). This is also the place to outline departures from past procedures that involve financial matters such as the cessation of charging fines, thereby eliminating a petty cash fund formerly used for small purchases.

An often-omitted section which belongs in the annual report is that outlining the library staff's personal activities during the year such as participation in school committees and events, convention attendance, trips or other outside visitation connected with education, any publications appearing during the year, and so forth. A resume supported by statistics should show the actual instructional time spent by the media administrator and/or staff members in direct involvement with classroom instruction – book talks in the classroom or in the media center itself, directed instruction in library skills or other curriculum units, special displays prepared for teachers, and the like. Along with this should be a section on use of the libraries by faculty and students which may be reported in a variety of ways but which should include a tabulation of how many classes from which departments have specifically used the library. Some libraries also include an individual drop-in count, some count small groups, while others count only those groups or classes to which they speak directly or whom they teach in a classroom. No matter what combination is used, it is excellent practice to record as many of these as possible to document use of the facilities. Such a report reveals other facts to the principal, for example, if in scanning the tabulation he sees no mention of a particular department. This might suggest to him that the department head should be contacted in regard to strengthening the library link in the students' learning experiences. For, as the media administrator must realize, if the principal has no evidence, he does not know whether anything productive is happening between the media center, the teachers, and the students beyond the bare figures given in the circulation report. Used effectively, the annual report can be a showcase for the administrator's talent. He should make it work for him!

School and Community Relationships

Media administrators confronting this last category of tasks recognize that the boundaries of the school range as far as the students it serves may roam. Remember library school instructors who stressed those cardinal principles of knowing the community, knowing the patrons and their backgrounds, interests, and needs? Those principles certainly apply to the school scene and force the media manager to be alert to the type of outer community he serves as well as the one inside the school. This includes, of course, the immediate student body, the faculty and other administrators, the secretaries and other support staff, but should also include the P.T.A. or other parent group. These are community persons who are directly connected with the school and have its well-being at heart. In addition to parents, the outer community consists mainly of an area's public libraries as well as any private collections to which the school students might have access. As one method of fighting rising costs, as well as for other educational reasons, school libraries especially should investigate some of the many co-operative ventures being experimented with in the public library domain, The school pattern lends itself well to such efforts as junior and senior high schools of the same district are able to do serious acquisition planning for a more efficient utilization of funds and of collections. The media administrator must be the moving force if anything of this nature is attempted, since most other educators will be horrified by what appear to be tremendous logistic deterrents. In actuality, such obstacles are usually revealed to be paper tigers subject to disintergration.

The media program should be as well represented in the local and school press as any other aspect of the school, and unless the school has a publicity chairman who coordinates such matters, the media administrator must again assume leadership. Apart

from lurid tales of card catalogs being dumped on the floor by departing upperclassmen, any newspaper story he is able to place serves a useful purpose in telling the media center's story. Items in the school newspaper, on the bulletin boards, in the daily bulletin, or on giveaway lists, will assist in building an expectant attitude of 'what next?' toward the media center. Too often, staff rely on the traditional book exhibits or posters in the library to stimulate interest, forgetting that unless people come inside, such displays will go unseen.

The media administrator and his staff, ultimately, can be the best school and community relationship ploys. The way the library staff roles are viewed by others and by themselves is the key to either success or failure here. Many librarians see themselves as teachers and administrators; others may see them as clerks. Some librarians see **themselves** as clerks and traditionally shun the administrative arena. This is a mistake to be remedied immediately by constantly enlarging one's vision to include the total educational impact of librarianship far beyond the immediate concerns. As in all things, actions speak louder than protestations of professionalism; thus, successful performance in major administrative responsibilities is one way to clearly identify the media manager.

N.B. To forestall many angry letters from the female media managers who may read this, the masculine pronoun was used to avoid the awkwardness of the he/she syndrome!

MANUSCRIPTS

The Editor invites manuscripts of up to 2,500 words on subjects relating to Resource Centre/or School Library management and use, or on general topics relating to education and media. Reviews of books will be assigned by the Editor.

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